

Report on Bell-ringing for the Parish Council AGM 28th May 2019

As you probably all know, St Sampson Church has a tower of five bells, and our Tower Captain is Ruth Varco. The ringers meet every Monday except in August to practise, and ring before all the 9.15 morning services, as well as on special occasions, such as weddings, the various Christmas and Easter services, and Remembrance Sunday, when the bells are muffled.

There are 8 regular ringers, all from our village, although occasionally a ringer from Fowey or from Lostwithiel will come and join our Monday sessions.

At Christmas time this year we noticed that some ropes were very worn, so we took all five bell-ropes to Mendip Ropes, who are located in the middle of the Somerset levels. They found that some of the lower ropes had rot, and the fellets (or Sallies) were in poor condition. So we took the decision to have five new ropes. The upper ropes that wind round the wheel in the ringing chamber are now made of Dyneema, a very superior and hard-wearing material much favoured by serious yachtsmen! The fellets have been hand made, still in traditional Cornish colours, and the rope from the fellets downward are made of traditional hemp. The new ropes cost some £1,300 and we are delighted with the result.

If you find the above incomprehensible, then you are most welcome to come and watch a Monday practice and, if you wish, try your hand at this ancient art.

You will also probably remember that back in 2015 we rescued a set of handbells from the church shed and played a couple of very simple tunes for the village revue. Those who rang so enjoyed the experience, that the church very generously agreed to send away the handbells to The Whitechapel Foundry to see what they thought of them. The answer was mixed. The bells were made by William Dunne in about 1840, which was good, but their condition was very poor. So we had new mechanisms, new leather handles, had the bells tuned and polished, and bought 5 new bells plus a case to put them all in. The whole venture cost well over £4,000, which I feared might prove to be an expensive folly.

Not at all. We have 16 regular handbell ringers, all but one from this village, and their enthusiasm is undiminished. We ring in the pub and church at Christmas time, we have rung for the Tywardreath WI, at an old people's home, and, of course, we hold an annual concert in The Boathouse in the summer – this year on Saturday 27th July. Very recently we arranged to have our handbells inspected, and they were pronounced to be in good order, needing only a little oil to keep the mechanism in top condition.

So it is worth underlining that there are 20 villagers who ring either big bells or handbells or both on a Monday or Tuesday each week, and when you add to this number the villagers who sing in the choir but don't bell-ring, then some 30 people from the village sing or ring every week – and this does not include those who attend services there. Surely more villagers take part in singing or ringing

on a weekly basis than in any other weekly village activity. So I am delighted that the church continues to have a voice on the Parish Council and on the Village Hall Committee, and I am sure that you would agree that this is only right and proper in view of the number of villagers who go up to our church each week.

We live in an age when many towers are closing because they cannot attract bell ringers, when many churches no longer have a choir, and when opportunities to ring handbells throughout the year are very limited (most villages only bring out the handbells at Christmas time). So it is wonderful to report that in Golant singing, and ringing bells both great and small are thriving.

Simon Funnell